

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ERDA-05 NRC-05 L-03 FEA-01
AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00
EB-07 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 NSAE-00 NSC-05
OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04
TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /117 W
-----012011Z 027080 /75

P R 011638Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0735
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 4018

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH, US, AR, PE
SUBJECT: RESEARCH REACTOR FUEL REPROCESSING AND ARGENTINA-PERU
NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

DEPT PASS ERDA AND NRC; VIENNA FOR USIAEA; BRUSSELS FOR USEC

REF: 76 STATE 221820

1. ARGENTINE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION (CNEA) HAS RECENTLY
BEEN REORGANIZED TO MAKE THE REGULATORY SIDE SEPARATE AND INDEPEND-
ENT, EXCEPT FOR REPORTING TO THE CNEA PRESIDENT, UCH AS WAS THE
CASE WITH USAEC PRIOR TO FORMATION OF ERDA AND NRC.

2. A KEY EXECUTIVE IN THE NEW SCHEME IS THE MANAGER OF
RADIOLOGICAL PROTECTION AND SAFETY. THIS DEPARTMENT'S RES-
PONSIBILITIES INCLUDE SAFETY EVALUATION, LICENSING, AND SAFEGUARDS.
IT IS NOW THE COUNTERPART TO NRC WITHIN CNEA. THE NEWLY-NAMED
MANAGER OF THIS DEPARTMENT IS ING. ABEL JULIO GONZALEZ, WHO
HAS JUST RETURNED TO ARGENTINA FROM THREE YEARS IN IRAN AS ADVISOR
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ON NUCLEAR SAFETY MATTERS.

3. GONZALEZ CALLED ON S&T COUNSELOR/ERDA SCIREP RE CLOSER COOPERA-
TION WITH NRC (SEPTEL) BUT ALSO RAISED "UNOFFICIALLY" TWO TOPICS
OF CURRENT INTEREST TO BOTH ARGENTINA AND U.S.

4. GONZALEZ SOUGHT OUR UNOFFICIAL OPINION WITH RESPECT TO OPTIONS

FOR PROCESSING THE SPENT FUEL FROM THE RA-1 AND RA-3 RESEARCH REACTORS, WHICH HAS BEEN GROWING IN QUANTITY AND REPRESENTS A CONSIDERABLE CAPITAL INVESTMENT TO CNEA. HE WONDERED WHETHER WE MIGHT BE PREPARED TO REPROCESS THE FUEL IN THE U.S. OR ALTERNATIVELY TO PERMIT REPROCESSING AT EZEIZA OR ELSEWHERE, E.G. PERHAPS AT MOL. WE WERE NON-COMMITTAL, INDICATING THAT WE UNDERSTOOD AN EVALUATION OF THIS PROBLEM ON WORLDWIDE BASIS WAS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY WITHIN USG. WHEN PRESSED RE TIMING, WE INDICATED WE THOUGHT U.S. G. SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO RESPOND MORE DEFINITELY IN A MONTH OR TWO.

5. IN SEPARATE, BUT RELATED MATTER, GONZALEZ CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT ARGENTINA HAS AGREED TO "LEND" A "ZERO POWER REACTOR" TO PERU. THIS WOULD BE, HE SAID, A CRITICAL FACILITY SIMILAR TO ARGENTINA'S RA-2, WHICH WAS A PROTOTYPE FOR RA-3. IT WOULD, HE SAID, USE HEU. AS GONZALEZ EXPLAINED IT, AGREEMENT WITH PERU CALLS FOR TITLE TO FUEL AND REACTOR TO REMAIN WITH ARGENTINA. PURSUANT TO REFTEL, WE WERE COMPLETELY NON-COMMITTAL AND OFFERED NO REPEAT NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO GONZALEZ. GONZALEZ EXPLAINED CNEA'S OPTIONS IN THIS MATTER IN FOLLOWING WAY: (A) USE HEU WHICH IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN ARGENTINA, PREVIOUSLY OBTAINED FROM U.S. UNDER U.S.-ARGENTINA BILATERAL, TO MAKE FUEL ELEMENTS FOR PERU; (B) REPROCESS RA-1 FUEL (WHICH WAS OBTAINED VIA IAEA) AND USE IT TO FABRICATE THE FUEL ELEMENTS FOR THE REACTOR TO BE LOANED TO PERU; (C) TRANSFER FUEL FROM THE RA-1 (IAEA-SUPPLIED) TO THE U.S.-ARGENTINA BILATERAL TO REPLACE FUEL FROM THE LATTER TO BE USED FOR THE PERUVIAN REACTOR. OPTIONS (A) OR (B) WOULD CLEARLY BE SUBJECT TO U.S. APPROVAL. OPTION (C) IN CNEA'S VIEW, MIGHT NOT REPEAT NOT NECESSARILY REQUIRE U.S. APPROVAL.
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6. GONZALEZ NEEDS AN INDICATION OF U.S. POSITION WITH SOME URGENCY IN VIEW OF ARGENTINA-PERU AGREEMENT. WHILE APPROACH WAS "UNOFFICIAL", "OFFICIAL" APPROACH CAN BE EXPECTED SHORTLY DEPENDING ON OUR REACTION OR LACK THEREOF TO THIS INITIAL INQUIRY.

7. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT COMMENTS SOONEST.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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